

**Thomas Jefferson to Dr. George Logan, May 11,
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TO DR. GEORGE LOGAN J. MSS.

Washington, May 11, 05.

Dear Sir, —I received last night a letter from Mr. Thomas Brannagan 163 S. Water St., Philadelphia, asking my subscription to the work announced in the inclosed paper.¹ The cause in which he embarks is so holy, the sentiments he expresses in his letter so friendly that it is highly painful to me to hesitate on a compliance which appears so small. But that is not it's true character, and it would be injurious even to his views, for me to commit myself on paper by answering his letter. I have most carefully avoided every public act or manifestation on that subject. Should an occasion ever occur in which I can interpose with decisive effect, I shall certainly know & do my duty with promptitude & zeal. But in the meantime it would only be disarming myself of influence to be taking small means. The subscription to a book on this subject is one of those little irritating

¹ This refers to *Avenia; or, A Tragical Poem on the Oppression of the Human Species*, an anti-slavery work printed in Philadelphia in 1805.

measures, which, without advancing it's end at all, would, by lessening the confidence & good will of a description of friends composing a large body, only lessen my powers of doing them good in the other great relations in which I stand to the publick. Yet I cannot be easy in not answering Mr. Brannagan's letter, unless he can be made sensible that it is better I should not answer it; & I do not know how to effect this, unless you would have the

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goodness, the first time you go to Philadelphia to see him and to enter into an explanation with him.

I see with infinite pain the bloody schism which has taken place among our friends in Pennsylvania & New York, & will probably take place in other states. The main body of both sections mean well, but their good intentions will produce great public evil. The minority, whichever section shall be the minority, will end in coalition with the federalists, and some compromise of principle because these will not sell their aid for nothing. Republicanism will thus lose, and royalism gain some portion of that ground which we thought we had rescued to good government.

I do not express my sense of our misfortunes from any idea that they are remediable. I know that the passions of men will take their course, that they are not to be controulled but by despotism, & that this melancholy truth is the pretext for despotism. The duty of an upright administration is to pursue it's course steadily, to know nothing of these family dissensions, and to cherish the good principles of both parties. The war *ad internecionem* which we have waged against federalism has filled our latter ties with strife and unhappiness. We have met it, with pain indeed, but with firmness, because we believed it the last convulsive effort of that hydra which in earlier times we had conquered in the field. But if any degeneracy of principle should ever render it necessary to give ascendancy to one of the rising sections over the other, I thank my God it will fall to some other to perform that operation. The only cordial I wish to carry into my retirement is the undivided good will of all those with whom I have acted. Present me affectionately to Mrs. Logan, and accept my salutations & assurance of constant friendship & respect.¹

¹ On this political schism in Pennsylvania, Jefferson presently wrote to Leib:

“ Monticello, Aug. 12, 05.

“ Dear Sir,—A journey southwardly from hence has prevented my sooner acknowledging the receipt of your favor of July 22. I see with extreme concern the acrimonious dissensions

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into which our friends in Pennsylvania have fallen, but have long since made up my mind on the propriety of the general government's taking no side in state quarrels. And with respect to myself particularly, after eight & thirty years of uniform action in harmony with those now constituting the republican party, without one single instant of alienation from them, it cannot be but my most earnest desire to carry into retirement with me their undivided approbation & esteem. I retain therefore a cordial friendship for both the sections now so unhappily dividing your state. You mention that 'Doctr. Logan had informed the person that he had just received a letter from you exhorting him to use all his influence to procure the reelection of Govr. McKean, for that to displace him would be extremely injurious to the republican cause.' Whatever may be the personal esteem I entertain for Govt. McKean and the harmony with which we acted when members of the same body, I never conceived that that would justify my taking sides against Mr. Snyder, or endeavouring in any way to influence the free choice of the state. I therefore have never written any such letter, nor a letter of such import to any mortal. And further, my long & intimate acquaintance with Doctr. Logan & my knowledge of his strict honor leaves the fullest conviction in my mind that there has been some mistake in the hearing, understanding or quoting his words. I the more readily believe that there has been error somewhere when I consider how far opposite passions have the power of tingeing objects seen by men equally honest, of presenting them under aspects totally different, and of perverting their understandings of the same expressions. My confidence in Doctr. Logan's truth is so entire that I dare affirm that he will declare to anyone that he never received such a letter from me. No, sir, so far from taking a side in this distressing quarrel that I took upon both with undiminished affection, & would do anything in my power to assuage & reconcile them. Finally, my dear sir, when you recollect the bitter hostility of the common enemy towards me, the unrelenting perseverance with which they torture, mutilate & pervert every sentence which falls from my pen, you will excuse me in beseeching that nothing of this letter may get into the public prints. Accept my friendly salutations & assurances of great esteem & respect."